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Et te sonantem plenius aureo
Alcæe plectro. — Hor.

Thou too, Alcæus, from thy golden shell
Pours a deep melodious swell. — An.

To some minds it is a pleasure of the high-
-est order, to pore over the pages of ancient com-
-mentators, to collate readings, and wade through
the disputes of grammarians; to intellects of
this nature we owe many obligations. They
have done the world much good, and them-

selves very little. To persons like ourselves, whose pursuits are severally directed to some one practical object, and generally to the pleasanter paths of literature, a task of this nature is by no means agreeable. We will not indeed say, that we derive no pleasure in perusing the curious disquisitions of learned men, on a solitary line, or a knotty passage; but when we have spent hours in the examination of three or four apocryphal lines, our conscience smites with having left that hour a blank in the chapter of the day.

Our desire is to present our readers with truth in a pleasant garb; and for our own good as well as for their amusement, we seek to draw from the mine of ages pure gold, unadulterated and uncoined.

In pursuance of the plan commenced in the fifth volume of these Incubations we sat down to examine the fragments of Alcæus, in order to select such as were

worth translating. Of this author, as many lines and fragments of lines have been supposed to be detected of his, the commentator has necessarily more, and the essayist less to say, than of the others, translations from whom we have attempted. Our efforts were attended, in the present instance, with melancholy reflections, and ended in complete disappointment. Little is indeed left, to sanction the fame's a name so celebrated; the toil of the scholiast has but served to make that little more suspicious and less satisfactory.

Of the history of Alcæus, it is unnecessary in this number to give any detail, as our information could extend no further than the limits which can be gleaned from the columns of an encyclopædia or biographical dictionary. Among the other points of resemblance between him and his imitator Horace, he sung the praises of heroes and exalted his countrymen by his verses, while he proved it is said

a coward in the field. He was a poet of love and wine; to the latter subjects, their fragments: the fragmentorum which remain of him principally relate. A late learned Editor* of his works place calls him "Sapphonis amasium", a suitor of Sappho's; this we gave our reasons for not believing in noticing the character of that Poetess. The same author informs us that the place of the poet's birth should be spelt Mytilene, the upsilon being the second instead of the fourth letter! Thus In the luminous history of Grecian poetry, which Lumisden has given us in his Museum, he mentions Alcæus as poet, musician and warrior. "Quintilian gives him great praise for the "boldness of his satire against tyrants and "occasionally for the moral tendency of his "writings, but admits that sometimes his "muse is loose and wanton." We may gather this from the fragments themselves, which have been principally preserved by Athenæ-

* Museum Criticum. No. IV + sic restituit Steph. Byzantinus. Idem.

us. Some have been gleaned from Strabo and Herodotus; but as they were found without visible measure, and have been scanned at Cambridge, Alcæus is not answerable for them.

Respecting the manner in which the works of Alcæus were lost, there is a tradition preserved of the report of Demetrius Chalcondylas, that the Greek priests acquired so much authority with the Cæsars at Byzantium, that by their influence many of the entire works of ancient authors were consumed; particularly those relating to love - and thus the remains of Menander, Diphilus, Apollodorus, Philemon, Alexis, Sappho, Erinna, Anacreon, Mimnermus, Bion, Alemanand Alcæus perished.

But that which makes these fragments interesting in a high degree, and by which we may also judge of the merit of Alcæus, is that Horace borrowed not only his measure but his style, his thoughts from the Grecian;

nay, often he is a mere translator. As to the measure of his odes, he makes it the foundation of his immortality that he first adapted the Aeolian song to the Latin language,

Princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos
Deduxisse modos.

As to his being a translator, we need only quote the following fragments to establish it.

Μηδὲν ἄλλο φυτεύσῃς πρότερον δένδρεον
ἀμπέλου.

Nullam, Vare, sacra vite prius severis
arborem. Hor.

Compare also the fragment on the Storm, and — Et malus celeri saucius Africo. Hor.

Ὑει μὲν ὁ Ζεύς, ἐκ δ' οὐρανοῦ μεγὰς
χειμών· πεπαγασιν δ' ὑδατων ῥοαι.

\+ + + + +
\+ + + +

καββαλλε τον χειμων', επι μεν τιθεις
πυρ, εν δε κιρναις Φοινον αφειδεως
μελι χρων· αυλας αμπι κορυσα
μαλθακον αμπι [τιθεις] γυναϊκειον.

Vides ut alta &c

— — — — — — — — —

Distortur frigus, ligna super foco
Largè reponens: atque benignius
Deprome quadrimum Sabinâ
O Thaliarche, merum diota-

This is a close imitation; and we may reasonably conclude, that the whole ode of Horace is taken from Alcæus. If we judge of the merit of the latter thus, he surely can ask no higher meed from fame.

The following is a translation of the fragment.

The torrent pours, the storm is high,
The fountains gush from all the sky;
Heap on the hospitable wood,
Pour high the bright and cheering flood;
In circlure warm girt with thy brow,
Let the rain pour, the torrents flow-

This is a picture of comfort; and what we call "comfortable" is never poetical. For, if we understand the meaning of the Aeolic word γναφαλλα, the poet recommends the use of a woollen night cap- Horace has left this out.

Parentage of Love.

Ἔρωτα + + δεινότατον θεῶν
ἐρεινάτ' εὐπέδιλος Ἶρις
χρυσοκόμα Ζεφύρῳ μιγεῖσα.

Swift Iris in her radiant flight
Mingled with Zephyr golden haired;
As subtle, glorious and as light
Love sprung from them, thus paired.

Or, if the reader pleases—

With the bright haired Zephyr blended
Iris swift with radiant wing;
Mystic Love from hence descended,
Subtle, swift and perishing.

Drinking song.

Τεγγε πνευμονα Φοῖνα· σοῦαρ ἀστρον περιτέλλεται
ἀ δ' ὥρα χαλεπα, πάντα δε δίψη υπο καυματος.
ἀχεῖ δ' ἐκ πεταλῶν τα δ' ἀν τεττιξ + +
ἀνθεῖ 'κυ σκολοπος· νῦν δε γυναῖκες μιαρώτατοι.

Let us drink! the star of eve
Twinkles in the vault above;
'Tis the hour when all things grieve,
Parent-nature's thirst they prove.

While the cricket from the bough
Chirps his melancholy lay,
And the prickly thistle now
Blossoms in the pallid ray.
Woman at the lonely hour
Wakes to soft or wild desire;
Let us drink, for wine hath power
Or to light or quench the fire!

To Pan.

Ἰω Πάν! Ἀρκαδίας μεδέων κλεεννᾶς. κ.τ.λ.

To Pan! the ruler fam'd
Of Arcadia's wood-lands wild,
Of gay dance and mirth untam'd
Parent, heav'n descended child!

To Pan! in song delighting!
Come and o'er our glee preside;
While the minstrel strain inviting
Pours its gladsome notes of pride!

We have conquer'd, as we sought,
We have conquer'd, we are free,
And the Gods who with us fought
Yield Minerva victory!

This last fragment is not to be found in the

Cambridge edition; whether from accident or design, we are unable to say.

The following fragment describes the variety of armour with which his hero (μέγας δορυσσ only, not referring to himself, in the original) according to scholiasty was adorned.

Μαρμαίρει δε μέγας δόμος χαλκοῖο &c.

Bright shine with burnish'd rays the hall,
And helmets gleam along the wall:
The dome they hide with flaming glow,
While nod the milk white crests below,
That waved on many a godlike brow.
Next rise the brazen greaves array,
That ward the archer's shaft away:
And mark the quilted thorax white,
The hollow shields here pois'd aright,
The serried blades in Chalcis wrought,
The glittering belts, and pass we not
The purple robes - no, heaven forfend!
To them the panoply must bend!

We have translated the last sentence as a sarcasm, faithfully as we believe. For it is certainly unhappy conclusion; and, if the

poet intended it not; his winding up is extremely puerile.

The song of the Athenians at their festival to commemorate the expulsion of Hipparchus, is attributed, we know not with justice, to Alcæus. It is beautiful in its energetic simplicity, and exquisitely melodious in that language, whose harmony is untranslateable. Neither can Harmodius and Aristogiton, conveniently be as good friends in English verse, as they were

Ὅτι τὸν τύραννον κτανέτην

HYMN

To Harmodius & Aristogiton.

In myrtle shade we hide the blade
As did the champions brave
Who slew the tyrant and restor'd
Our equal laws again.

Harmodius lov'd, by time unmov'd
Thy memory never shall die,
In isles blest thy shade shall rest
With heroes bright on high!

In myrtle shade we hide the blade
As did the champions two,
When at Minerva's sacrifice
The tyrant-base they slew.

Forever known as time rolls on
Lov'd shades! be ye adord,
Who gave to hell our tyrant-foe,
Our equal laws restor'd!

By selecting some other fragments, consisting of one and two lines, more light might be thrown on the character of Alcæus, as a votary of Venus and Bacchus. But the few we have given, relating to him as a lover, drinker and warrior must suffice; and we believe our readers are ready to exclaim with us — κυριε ελεησον!

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